The reward of *Sabr*

- Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: "**Whoever of the believers that bears patiently with a tribulation that befalls him, has the reward of a thousand martyrs**."[Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol.2, bab *al-sabr*, hadith # 17]
- Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: "**When the believer enters his grave, *salat* is on his right hand, *zakat* on his left, virtue faces him, with *sabr* taking him under its shelter. When the two angels encharged with questioning enter upon him, *sabr* says to *salat, zakat* and virtue, 'Take care of your companion, and if you fail to assist him I will take care of him myself.**"[*Ibid*, hadith # 8]

An advice to attain *sabr*

This world is a believer's prison. Gather all the strength at your command and be patient and forbearing throughout its ups and downs. With courage and fortitude, stand against adversities and calamities. Make yourself understand that the agitation and anguish inside you, aside from involving a great disgrace by themselves, are futile in confrontation with sufferings and calamities. Be happy with God and don't complain in front of creatures about His irresistible decrees and inevitable ordainments. During the times of hardships, turn your heart's attention to the focal point of Absolute Perfection (God) and you will witness its effects in this world itself and your heart will attain such an expanse that it will become the realm of the manifestation of God's sovereignty. Richness and contentment will then pervade your heart such that everything related to this world will become worthless in your eyes. *Sabr,* forbearance and restraint bring fair, plentiful rewards and have sublime and beautiful forms in the world of *Barzakh* (purgatory). If you have faith in God and you believe that all the affairs lie in His mighty hands, you will not complain before God Almighty of the hardships of life and the adversities that strike you. Rather, you will accept them willingly, fulfil your duties and thank Him gratefully for His bounties. [Adopted from Al-Khumayni, *Forty Hadith*, chapter 16, 'Sabr']

Conclusion:

- Imam 'Ali (a) said: "**The one who practices *sabr* will never be deprived of success, even though it may take a long time**." [*Nahjul Balagha*, saying # 153]

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...And be patient and persevering, for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.
(Qur'an, 8: 46)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a) said:
"Verily, *sabr* is to faith what the head is to the body. The body perishes without the head, and so also when *sabr* goes, faith also disappears."
[Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, bab *al-sabr*, p. 128, hadith # 2]

Merits of the Soul ...

Patience

(*sabr*)

When Imam 'Ali (a) was asked about faith (*iman*), he replied: "The structure of faith is supported by four pillars: Patience (*sabr*), Conviction (*yaqin*), Justice (*`adl*) and Struggle (*jihad*). Then he explained further: 'Patience comprises of four attributes: Eagerness, fear, piety and anticipation (of death). So, whoever is eager for Paradise will ignore evil temptations; whoever fears the fire of Hell will abstain from sins; whoever practices piety will easily bear the difficulties and hardships of the life of this world and whoever anticipates death will hasten to perform good deeds.'"
[Al-Amidi, *Ghurar ul Hikam wa Durar ul Kalim*, hadith # 2897]

The definition of *Sabr*

- The famous scholar Nasir al-Din al-Tusi said: "***Sabr* means restraining the self from agitation when confronted with undesirables**."
- The great gnostic (*`arif*) Khwajah `Abd Allah al-Ansari said: "***Sabr* means restraining the self from complaint about hidden anguish**."

The Kinds and Degrees of *Sabr*

There are various degrees and levels of *sabr* as indicated by the noble traditions and the reward and merit vary in accordance with degree and level.

- Imam 'Ali (a) said, "The Messenger of Allah (s) said: "***Sabr* is of three kinds: *sabr* at the time of affliction, *sabr* in regard to obedience, and *sabr* in regard to disobedience (of Allah). And the third one is superior to the first two kinds**." [Al-Kulayni*, al-Kafi*, vol. 2, bab *al-sabr*, hadith # 15]
- Imam 'Ali (a) said: "**Sabr is of two types: *sabr* on what you dislike and *sabr* on what you like.**" [*Mizan al-Hikmah*, hadith # 10099]

Relationship of *Sabr* and *Ma' rifah* of God

- As long as a person feels inner anguish over the misfortunes and hardships of life, his *ma'rifah* (gnosis) of God remains deficient. When a person achieves contentment (*rida*) and satisfaction at the misfortunes and adverse conditions, his soul reaches a higher station of nearness to God. *Sabr* in regard to abstinence from sins and fulfilment of duties (*ta'at*) is related to deficient knowledge of the secrets of '*ibadat* (worship) and the hereafterly forms of acts of sin and obedience.
- When a person firmly believes that what he is going to obtain in the other world after death is a form of his own deeds performed in this worldly life, he will have no distress while going through hardships and hostile situations. Rather, such a person becomes happy with the difficulties encountered in the fulfilment of divine duties. His joy becomes more than the anguish of a normal person over such difficulties. His attachment to God increases during adverse circumstances. A manifestation of such a high station of *rida* was exemplified in the personalities of companions of Imam Hussain (a) in the event of Karbala.
- Imam Reza (a) said: (among the exhortations of Prophet (s) to Abu Dharr (ra): **"…If you are able to act for the pleasure (*rida*) of Allah with firm conviction, than do so. And if this is not possible for you than practice *sabr* on unpleasant matters as it will bring plenty of blessings."** [Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 82, p. 136, hadith # 21]

The outcome of *Sabr*

- *Sabr* produces many good results that include soul's training and discipline. If a person bears patiently with misfortunes and calamities for some time and seriously endures the hardships entailed during worship, rites and the bitterness arising from the renunciation of forbidden pleasures, and if all this is done for the sake of obedience to his Lord and Provider, it gradually becomes easy for him to bear with the hardships and difficulties. The soul of a patient person relinquishes its earlier uncontrolled state and he develops an enduring luminous faculty that raises him over the station of *sabr* to reach other higher spiritual stations. Practicing *sabr* while enjoining good and forbidding evil (*amr bil ma'ruf wa nahi 'anil munkar*) makes a person more steadfast and firm.
- Anguish, anxiety and untoward body movements at the time of financial loss, death, natural disasters etc., are the signs of soul's weakness. They deprive one's personality of stability and dignity, weaken the determination, and enfeeble the intellect. At such delicate moments, *sabr* is key to the gates of felicity and deliverance. It strengthens the will and the power of resolution to overcome adverse circumstances, make rational decisions and act wisely.
- *Sabr* in regard to sins is the source of the self's *taqwa* (fear of God). *Sabr* in regard to obedience (*ta'at*) is the source of intimacy with God and His love. And *sabr* in misfortunes is the source of *rida* with divine destiny and decrees.

Higher Levels of *Sabr*

- *Sabr fi Allah (sabr* in God): It means steadfastness while endeavouring to get rid of evil habits (eg. lying, slandering, greed) and ugly traits (eg. egoism, hypocrisy, envy) and practicing abstinence from the objects of love and attraction (eg. avoiding *haram* music, giving up sleep for night prayers, eating moderately) during self-purification. It is the denial of selfhood in the path of the Beloved (God). This stage belongs to the wayfarers *(ahl al-suluk).*
- *Sabr ma`a Allah* (*sabr* with God): An ardent wayfarer in the path of God during his sincere *ibadat* and endeavours reaches the state of selflessness such that he from time to time witnesses intimacy with God. The light of His attributes and names illuminates his heart and vision. He has to be patient and safeguard himself from minor traces of self-love, pride, etc. during these phases in order to witness higher stages.
- *Sabr `an Allah* (*sabr* from God): It pertains to the stations of lovers of God who after experiencing His intense love have to return to their own physical world and bear separation from Him. It is the hardest and the most difficult of the stations. This sublime level of *sabr* is indicated by Imam 'Ali (a) in the famous Du`a Kumayl **"O my God, my Master and my Lord! Even if I were able to endure Thy chastisement, how shall I bear Thy separation**?!**"**
- *Sabr bi Allah* (*sabr* for God): It is the state of perfection experienced when one achieves the station of existing only with God (*baqa' bi Allah*) and moulds himself with the norms of Allah (*takhalluq bi akhlaq Allah).* It is for those blessed with stability and steadfastness, and is attained after *sabr* with God.